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AFGHANISTAN

Alternative Livelihoods & Agriculture Update

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Alternative Livelihoods Program (ALP) Making Progress in Afghanistan:

- Rapid deployment of cash for work program **generated 4.4 million work days of paid labor and resulted in more than \$15 million in wages paid to 193,978 farmers.**
- Over **236 km of roads and 6,200 km of irrigation canals** have been rehabilitated affecting **290,000 hectares** of land.
- USAID has improved **1,012 km of canals in the south resulting in better irrigation to 42,620 hectares of land in the southern region.** Improved irrigation is critical to produce high-value agriculture, such as grape production in the south, whereas poppy production can be sustained without irrigation.
- USAID funding helped **550,000 farmers receive seed and fertilizer** to plant crops. This is the country's first national distribution program of this size. Along with the distribution of 14,000 metric tons of winter wheat and vegetable seed and 40,000 metric tons of fertilizer, anti-poppy messages are included. **Over 1,000 farmers in all 34 provinces are benefiting** from these tangible incentives not to grow poppy.
- Afghanistan's **national seed and fertilizer distribution program reached 386 of the nation's 397 districts** in time for the fall planting season. This counter-narcotics effort **successfully reached 97% of its target beneficiaries.**
- USAID has **launched an orchard development program in the eastern provinces** of Nangarhar and Laghman. The project encompasses 3,000 hectares of commercial orchards affecting 5,000 farmers. In November 2005, trainings were held for 2,800 farmers.
- Over **3,750 women have benefited from household income generating activities** in Nangarhar province reaching women in 13 districts.



PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

Staff agronomists check fruit nursery stocks in Nangarhar Province.

USAID EXTENDS CROP PRODUCTION AND EXPORT

USAID is facilitating agricultural production and exportation to global markets in Afghanistan. By boosting trade opportunities and developing agriculture, farmers are being provided with alternatives to poppy production contributing to regional stability and improved livelihoods.

Funding has enabled the construction of five cold storage units with another three underway in the south. These refrigeration units allow farmers and their cooperatives to maintain a high quality of fresh produce for export. The cold storage units allow the Fresh Fruit Exporters' Association of Kandahar, other Afghan organizations, and entrepreneurs to export over 50 metric tons of fresh grapes to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Dubai, and India. Former trade with Dubai and India is now being revived as a result of the cold storage units.

Additionally, USAID is assisting in the export of 200 metric tons of raisins from Kandahar and other provinces to buyers in Russia and Ukraine, and plans are being implemented to help export a total of 1,000 metric tons to these buyers. Other produce is also being exported such as 66 metric tons of fresh pomegranates to Singapore, with 33 metric tons in cold storage ready for export.



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IRRIGATION AND EMPLOYMENT IN SHEIKH MISRI REFUGEE CAMP



Laborers from the Sheikh Misri refugee camp work clearing a large canal.

PHOTO: DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES, INC.



PHOTO: DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES, INC.

In Nangarhar, residents of the Sheikh Misri refugee camp on the Hada farm are largely unemployed. This project pays thousands of the refugee camp's inhabitants to desilt nearby irrigation canals, providing them with funds to buy food and buttress their tents for the winter.

USAID is supplementing long term efforts to improve alternative livelihoods through an immediate needs program (AINP). One example of this involves canal construction that is underway on Hada Farms with residents of the Sheikh Misri Camp. Camp residents represent a vulnerable population that has lost income potential through poppy production.

This immediate needs program compliments longer term alternative livelihood initiatives by seeking to provide licit employment in Nangarhar province and an economic safety net as the opium economy shrinks.

Sheikh Misri Camp, on the outskirts of Jalalabad, is situated on a government farm. Refugees are facing their second winter in the camp. Leadership in the camp is controlled by a 12-member council or shura.

Bilquis, a dynamic woman who began as a social worker in Pakistan and now leads the shura, describes harsh living conditions in the camp. Tents are tattered and most people lack funds to buy firewood to keep warm. Although various agencies have provided help, people lack food, clean water, and employment. The residents of Sheikh Misri are waiting to be resettled with help from the governor of Nangarhar.

Now through USAID and its implementers, camp residents are rehabilitating the irrigation infrastructure that provides water for about 350 hectares of farmland. The project employs about 10% of the available workers, and the jobs are rotated by the camp shura. Residents comprise of six work crews of 20 people each, plus team leaders, a foreman, and a shura representative.

This alternative livelihood initiative is creating employment to replace some of the income that has in the past come from work on poppy fields while reaching a vulnerable population led by a courageous woman.